

2006 General Assembly Priorities for the City of Norfolk

- 1) **City Charter Changes:** Amendments are needed to the Norfolk City Charter to reduce the annual number of City Council meetings. Council can currently cancel 12 meetings per year, and the proposed amendment would change that to 16. Secondly, amendments are requested to require an affirmative vote of three-fourths of Council for the sale of public property.
- 2) **Conference Center Sales Tax Capture:** Amend Section 58.1-608.3 of the *Code of Virginia* to include the City of Norfolk through population brackets. The change will enable the proposed Norfolk Hotel and Conference Center at 200 Main Street to repay bonds by capturing the generation of sales tax.
- 3) **Housing Trust Fund:** The City requests the Commonwealth to establish a State Housing Trust Fund. This fund will provide matching funds to localities that already have, or will establish within one fiscal year, housing trust funds that help finance affordable housing and permanent supportive housing for the homeless. Localities will be required to provide local revenue or corporate sources as matching funds.

Note: The Virginia Housing Commission has endorsed a draft proposal for the creation of the Virginia Housing Partnership Trust fund that would be funded by dedicating a portion of state recordation tax revenues. The fund has also been included in the Governor's introduced budget.

- 4) **Real Estate Tax:** The City Council requests the General Assembly to Establish a tax exemption program based on following:
 - Single family owner-occupied residence
 - Primary residence and in residence for at least five years
 - Assessment increased by a certain amount
 - Moderate income (but not eligible for any senior/disabled tax relief program)
 - Exempt homeowner from paying a certain portion of his or her taxes
- 5) **Norfolk Electric Transit Bus Replacement:** The City requests \$7 million to replace the current NET buses operating in Downtown Norfolk. This request has been made officially to Governor Warner through the interim report of the Commission on Urbanized Transportation chaired by Councilman Randy Wright.

Regional and Statewide Issues

- 1) **Hampton Roads 2030 Regional Transportation Plan:** the Hampton Roads Metropolitan Planning Organization & Planning District Commission recently endorsed a package of projects and funding recommendation for our 2030 Regional Transportation Plan.

The plan includes: the Third Crossing, the Southeastern Parkway, expansion of the Midtown Tunnel and MLK Freeway Extension, an upgrade to Route 460, and improving I-64 on the Peninsula and the Southside.

The MPO has endorsed a concept to place tolls on each of these facilities as well as begin tolls on existing parallel facilities. In addition to tolls, other revenues are necessary in order to begin construction at the earliest possible date. The reality is however, that without substantial investment by the Commonwealth, most, if not all, of these projects will not be built in the foreseeable future. The General Assembly should take action, this session to address these investment shortfalls in order to provide for the best transportation network our state can offer.

- 2) **Codification of Joint Land Use Study:** The General Assembly is requested to enact legislation to implement recommendations contained within the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) between the cities of Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Norfolk and the U.S. Navy and to codify the implementation plan required by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to guarantee the future of Naval Air Station Oceana as a Master Jet Base.
- 3) **Re-benchmark K-12 Education Standards of Quality:** The current proposed changes resulting from re-benchmarking Direct Aid would increase state costs for public education by approximately \$986.0 million in the 2006-2008 biennium. The re-benchmarked cost of the unfunded SOQ changes proposed by the Board of Education total \$191.5 million. Together, these re-benchmarked costs would increase Direct Aid funding by \$1.18 billion in the 2006-2008 biennium.

Support for Community Partners

- 1) **Nauticus Port Exhibit:** Nauticus is requesting \$500,000 in the non-state agency category of the biennial budget to assist with the development of the Port of Virginia exhibit.
- 2) **Eastern Virginia Medical School:** EVMS is requesting an additional \$4.9 million in funding. According to the State's Base Adequacy Guidelines, EVMS is significantly under-funded. Only this year, in fact, did it reach 52 percent of State funding levels for public institutions, which are generally at or above 95 percent.

Issues to Monitor

- 1) **Cable Franchising:** The City of Norfolk opposes any efforts to change current cable franchise policy and practice in Virginia, including the "Verizon" proposal that would establish franchising "by right" within the Commonwealth.
- 2) **Eminent Domain Authority:** The City supports retention of current eminent domain authority for localities.

Note: We are analyzing the proposal recently endorsed by the Virginia Housing Commission, which establishes a more explicit definition of the term public use under 15.2-1800.

- 3) **Telecommunications Taxation:** The City of Norfolk opposes the telecommunications taxation proposal that would replace all current taxes and fees with one flat rate sales tax.

Future Issues

- 1) **Prostitution- Repeat Offenders:** The City considered requesting that the General Assembly create mandatory minimums for second prostitution offenses. Norfolk has over 150 convictions per year, and 40% are repeat offenders. In lieu of legislation, Second Chances will provide for the a 12-week Prostitution Prevention program to be administered outside of the jail, thereby offering the opportunity for offenders that receive suspended sentences an option to attend the program. Working in partnership with the Commonwealth's Attorney, the program will be offered for first time offenders. The Commonwealth's Attorney's Office will report data on recidivism rates in mid-2006 to determine success level of program.